

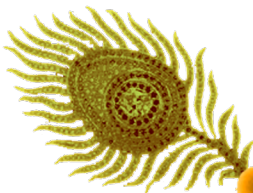
# GRS PATRIKA

**NEWSLETTER | 1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION**

Be informed, get involved and be inspired.

Read the latest news and events from the Gita Reading Society.

**June 2022**



## GITA READING SOCIETY

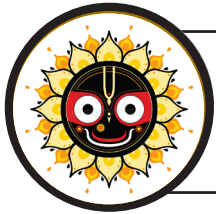
— CHANT AND BE HAPPY —

# Contents



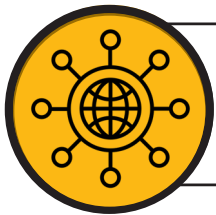
## OPENING REMARKS

This marks the start of a regular newsletter for GRS. Read the opening remarks by H.G Devakinandan Prabhu.



## SNANA YATRA

Snana Yatra refers to the bathing ceremony of Lord Jagannath, Baladev and Subhadra Devi



## OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Every day thousands of souls come in contact with Krsna consciousness through book distribution, festivals, temple visits, the Internet, and in other ways. Read about the latest preaching activities of by GRS congregation members.

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*“To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Krishna, the prime entity.”*

***His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada***



# Overview



## UPCOMING

Mark your diaries with the our upcoming festivals over the next quarter.



## BE INVOLVED

Devotional service means activities performed for the pleasure of Lordships - Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subadra. Get in touch to find out about the opportunities available.



# Opening



Dear Devotees,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada and Gurudeva! Hare Krishna!!

I hope this finds all of you enthusiastic, inspired, and happy in Krishna Consciousness.

We are excited to launch this quarterly newsletter – GRS Patrika - to keep the congregation continually updated about the various activities we engage in at Gita Reading Society for the pleasure of our dear Lordships - Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subadra. In the incorporation document of this global Hare Krishna movement, Srila Prabhupada wrote one of the purposes is “to bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Krishna, the prime entity.” We start this newsletter to further this purpose in Singapore.

We are glad that COVID-19 and the associated safety measures (including social distancing) have now eased in Singapore and that we are now able to celebrate festivals again in-person and with full pomp, and fervor. In this newsletter, we have listed the upcoming festivals, please accept my personal invitation to join us for these events and elevate yourself (and the community-at-large) in service to Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Their devotees.

Our motto at Gita Reading Society is the Vedic aphorism that Srila Prabhupada embodied and taught us: “*sarve sukhino bhavantu – everyone should be happy*”! We thank each and every one of you for helping us build Gita Reading Society to serve this mission now and in the future.

Yours in service to Srila Prabhupada,

**Devakinandan das**  
Zonal Supervisor

# Snana Yatra

*Compiled by Lila Sundari Devi Dasi from ISKCON Desire Tree, GRS Website, Mayapur.com and Raghunandan Das*

A special bath of Jagannath takes place on the Purnima of Jyestha month (Devasnan Purnima), to commemorate the appearance day of Lord Jagannath. It is popularly known as the Deba Snana Purnima, or Snana Yatra. We will see how the Snana Yatra is conducted in Jagannath Puri, and how it will be done today, at the Gauranga Center. Jagannath Puri

This is the first occasion in the year when the deities, Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra along with Sudarshan and Madanmohan are brought out from the Jagannath Temple. They are taken in procession to Snana Bedi located in the North-Eastern corner of the outer compound. The Snana Bedi is a stone platform where the Deities are placed for Snana Yatra. The deities are bathed there with a hundred and eight pitchers of water from a well near the Northern Gate.

According to Skanda Purana, when Indradyumna Maharaj installed the wooden deities, he arranged this bathing ceremony. This day is considered to be the birthday of Lord Jagannath. Held in the full-moon day of the month of Jyestha, it attracts thousands of visitors and pilgrims from all over India to Jagannath Puri.

In Puri, the bathing procedure is as follows: After Mangala Arati, the Suaras and Mahasuaras (different categories of persons entrusted with the services of the Deities) go in a ceremonial procession to fetch water from Suna Kua (Golden well) in one hundred and

thirty vessels of copper and gold. All of them cover their mouths with a piece of cloth so as not to contaminate it even with their breath. Then all the vessels filled with water are preserved in the Bhoga Mandap, which is the hall where offerings are made. The Palla pandas (a class of Brahmin priests) then purify the water with Haridra (turmeric), Java (whole rice), Benachera, Chandan, Aguru, flowers, perfumes and medicinal herbs.

The bathing festival takes place during the morning hours of the purnima tithi. The filled vessels are carried from the Bhoga Mandap to the Snana Bedi by the Suaras in a long single-line procession. This ritual is called 'Jaladhibasa' (Jala - water, abhishek - bath).

Prior to the bathing ceremony Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra, covered in silken cloth and then smeared with red powder, are taken in procession to a platform, Snana Bedi, which is specially decorated and purified with water and incense. One hundred and eight gold vessels are filled with water taken from a special well containing waters from all the holy tirthas. Abhiseka is performed with this water, accompanied by the chanting of Vedic Mantras (Pavamana Sukta), kirtana and blowing of conch shells.

This is the hottest time in India just prior to the refreshing monsoon rains. Due to the amount of bathing liquids that are offered to cool the Lord's transcendental body at this time, His painted form takes a bit of a wash-out. The Deity's faces are

painted on with natural earthly mineral paints and not modern oil-based paints, so when water is applied to cool Their forms it also has the effect of washing away the features of the former painting. As usual the Lord has a plan to make everything go smoothly. To bridge the episode of His bathing and the period that He comes out to bless everyone for Rathayatra, He has some special pastimes by which the devotees can serve Him and remember His wonderful forms.

In order to keep a wonderful mood of seeing the Lord in an uplifting manner, the Lord arranged the Hati Vesha festival where Lord Jagannatha and Lord Balaram put on the elephant dress, Hati Vesha, and Lady Subhadra wears a lotus flower vesha.

Lord Jagannatha's pastimes are such that after Snana Yatra, Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra become "sick", and, so, must take "medicines" and "take rest" until they become "rejuvenated" enough to go for Ratha-yatra. When they are "sick", they are offered bhoga containing medicinal herbs without the usual offerings. During this time the Daitas (descendants of Viswavasau, the Savara) repaint and restore the Deities and Jagannath's fine decorations. On the 16th day the Deities in their new forms after renovation become ready for the public view - darshan. The festival of the first appearance of the Lord Jagannath to his devotees is called Netrotsava (festival for the eyes) or Nava Yauvanotsava (festival of the ever new youth). According to priests of the Jagannath temple the devotee washes away all his

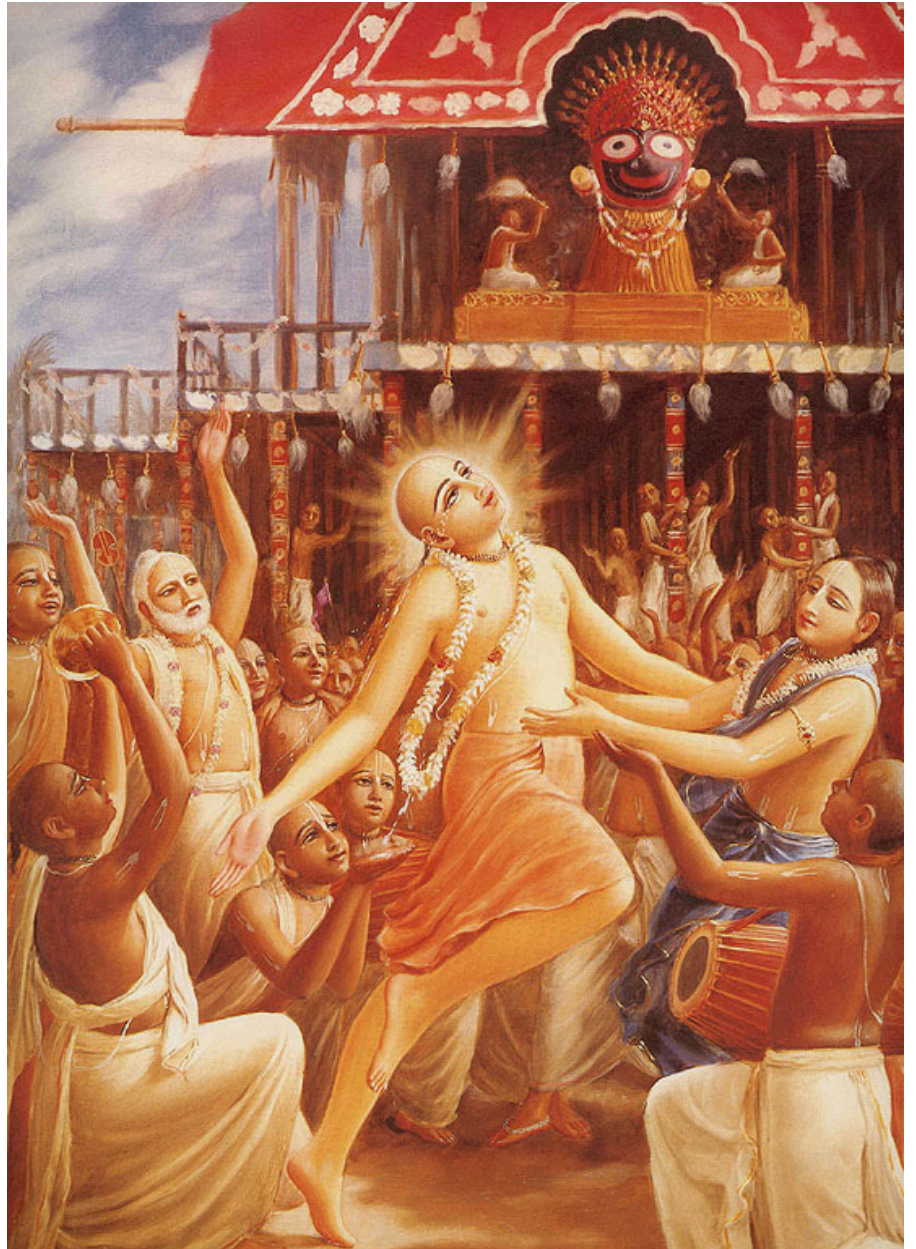


sins if he gets a vision of the Lord on this day. On this occasion, therefore, great rush of people occurs in the temple. Now we see how Snana Yatra will be performed in Gauranga Center.

### **Gauranga Center**

Snana Yatra will be celebrated at Gauranga Center today, for which we are all gathered here. Abhishek will be performed for Lords Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra. The Abhishek will be done using a mirror, and juices will not be poured on them. The Abhishek will be accompanied by kirtan. After the Abhishek, Their Lordships will be moved to the back of the altar and a picture of Their Lordships will be placed instead on the altar till Ratha Yatra.

We will have a lecture on the glories and significance of the Snana Yatra, followed by kirtan.



# Mantra Music Meditation

Transforming the world one heart at a time | Kirtan preaching

Compiled by Meera Joshi

*Harer nāma harer nāma, harer nāmaiva kevalam, kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva, nāsty eva gatir anyathā.*

*'In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.'* CC Madhya 6.242



One of the most effective ways to bring heart transformation in the present day is through mantra music meditation also known as Kirtan. On a regular basis, GRS hosts kirtans on the last Saturday of every month. Devotees such as Hwee Mataji would invite friends, yoga students and others through personal association and social media, one by one to come for the programs to expose them to the holy names.

Taking inspiration from New York's Bhakti Centre, Dhanajaya Prabhu, Hwee Mataji and Padma Locan Prabhu decided to setup a Friday evening program with a strong focus on Kirtan. The evenings would provide an informal setting to slowly introduce philosophy, engage in kirtan and honour prasadam. Over the last seven months since this initiative has started the program has been growing and many devotees are now onboard providing services such as leading kirtan, welcoming guests, giving presentations, distributing books, sharing philosophy, and serving prasadam.

The goal of this program is to preach Krishna Consciousness, for now the aim is to simply plant seeds through Kirtan and sharing. The initiative is targeted to those who have an interest in spirituality, seeking a higher purpose but have no fixed practice.

Padma Locan Prabhu has been instrumental through the delivery of his very gentle and subtle talks. This style of preaching is what attracted devotees such as Hwee Mataji to join the movement *"He was the one who first preached to me..so I thought it might work for some people like me who are also searching for a higher purpose."*



Through Kirtan, the team aim to form friendships with the attendees with the intention of eventually inviting them to join Bhagavad Gita classes organised by Padma Locan Prabhu, and then to have the attendees chanting rounds of Japa. This method has a light touch and brings the focus on forming meaningful relationships (association).

For more details contact: Hwee Mataji ([namastewithhwee@gmail.com](mailto:namastewithhwee@gmail.com))



***'In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.'***  
**CC Madhya 6.242**

# Spiritual Care at the Dead End

## Hospice outreach

*Note: Names have been changed to protect identities and the name of the hospice has been deliberately left out.*

*Compiled by Lila Sundari Devi Dasi*

After what seemed like hours, the doctor finally entered the ward. Freida desperately scanned the doctor's face for any signs of hope. Unfortunately, there were none. Freida waited for the doctor to speak. "I am sorry," the doctor started. By now Freida's heart was palpitating. "We have now done everything that is medically possible. We do not see any chance of recovery anymore. Now it's only a matter of time..." Freida felt the blood draining from her face, and her body go numb. Her lips were trembling. Before she could process this information, the doctor continued, "We can suggest several end of life care options..."

Unfortunately, this is the story of thousands around the world. In one sense, there is nothing more certain than death for every living being. A select few know of their impending end sometime before they die, as the great Parikshit Maharaj did. Out of these, a few opt to spend their last days in a hospice.



A hospice is a place that provides care for terminally ill patients. A day hospice where patients spend their waking hours in, is a place that provides activities to engage the patients, so they do not find life meaningless. This is done by games, and other engaging activities. What better way can there be to make life meaningful than Krsna Consciousness?

Here is where the devotees come in!

At the instruction of His Holiness B.V.V. Narasimha Maharaj, H.G. Padma Locan Prabhu launched the hospice outreach at Gita Reading Society. H.G. Padma Locan Prabhu, H.G. Renuka Mataji, H.G. Vraja Lila Mataji, H.G. Karuna Mataji, H.G. Subhanana Mataji and H.G. Sewa Kund Mataji are a part of a team that routinely visit and care for patients at a day hospice in Singapore. Patients are ferried every morning to the hospice. The devotees' day starts with helping the patients from the vehicle to the hospice premises.

Prasadam is cooked by Renuka Mataji, Karuna Mataji, Subhanana Mataji and Sewa Kund Mataji and served to the patients. Patients either honor them independently or are fed by Prabhu or the Matajis.

Devotees have found creative ways to infuse Krsna Consciousness into the different games and activities that are used to engage the patients. For example, they play musical chairs with the patients. The music they play for the game include songs such as George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" or Boy George's "Hare Krishna".

Padma Locan Prabhu does Yoga and Mindfulness meditation with the patients. He asks the patients to close their eyes and relax. Then he slowly describes a beautiful blue colored boy with curly black hair. The blue boy holds a flute in his hand and sports a peacock feather on his head. Sounds familiar? The boy is there to help them out. The participants are asked to meditate on feeding their blue friend some food and then eating

the remnants themselves.

Another activity that patients participate in is making flower garlands. Patients are taught how to make garlands. After these garlands are made, they are collected. Later on in the day, they are offered to their Lordships.

Which program can be complete without kirtan? Karuna Mataji sings and Vraja lila Mataji plays mridanga, as patients follow. Some patients are so intense, Padma Locan Prabhu says, as they sing the Holy Names.



Vraja Lila Mataji and Karuna Mataji perform kirtan. Hospice outreach is certainly a service for the tough. "Not everyone can handle this," Padma Locan Prabhu says. "Some devotees enthusiastically took up this service but dropped out after what they saw here." After all, these are seriously ill patients. They are suffering as their body deteriorates. For example, some patients come in so heavily medicated and drugged. They take a lot of medication such as morphine, to deal with intense pain associated with terminal illness. At other times, family members are so fed up watching a loved one suffer that they decide to give additional medication. And then, there are the inspiring stories...



**Rather than living in denial, let us embrace this reality with full courage, and prepare for the final examination of life with the weapon of devotional service – upasana astra.**



When Hang Kiat was about to leave his body, his family members held a vigil. They invited the devotees to join in. The devotees sang kirtan. Padma Locan Prabhu had the opportunity of slowly whispering the Holy Name to Hang Kiat's ear, as he passed on.

Mithun George, another patient, had slipped into a coma. The devotees sang kirtan for George, although he was from a Catholic family. While still in coma, George suddenly shouted "Rama! Rama! Rama!". He then fell silent. He left his body a few hours later. His family members later told the devotees that he used to be a Hindu before he converted. He was very interested in the Ramayana.

The family members were so grateful to the devotees, and so happy that George had chanted Lord Rama's names before he left.

All this has created a positive impact at the hospice. "The staff really like the devotees," Padma Locan Prabhu says. "They really want us to come. We can see that." Further, the dedicated service of the devotees has been rewarded with a Certificate of Appreciation by the hospice for 5 years of service. This is truly an inspiration for all of us. It is natural for devotees, and even others in general to turn to the Lord in times of dire need. The devotees serving at the hospice have really brought Krsna to the lives of those at the dead end, for whom there is no other hope. . .

Some patients at the hospice are quite hopeful, Padma Locan Prabhu says. Not all are depressed. Patients survive for two to twelve months after arriving into the hospice. However, some hold on to the futile belief that they will survive for long periods. They see their peers and

comrades graduate – a euphemism used among hospice circles for death. They see photos of graduated patients on the wall. However, they somehow do not believe the same will happen to them. Here we see an extreme example of what Bhishmadev said to King Yudhishtira. Bhishmadev told Yudhishtira that the strangest thing in life is that people around us die, yet we think we will live on forever. . .

Although it was surprising to hear this, to me it served as a reminder that we too are in a similar boat. Like the patients, each of us has our death sentence meted out to us. While we do not know the exact time, we do know for certain that death will come – uninvited – *yamasya karuna nasti* – Yamaraj has no mercy. Rather than living in denial, let us embrace this reality with full courage, and prepare for the final examination of life with the weapon of devotional service – *upasana astra*.

For more information about hospice outreach, please contact: [perdeep70@gmail.com](mailto:perdeep70@gmail.com)





# Eat Live Pray

## Raising culinary consciousness | Swaad

Compiled by Paramananda Das and Meera Joshi

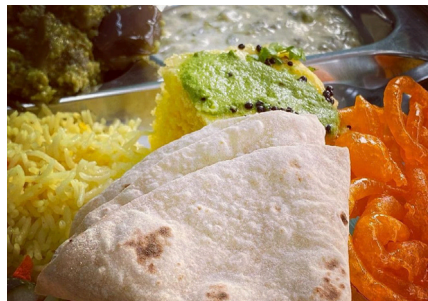
*Foods dear to those in the mode of goodness increase the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, fatty, wholesome, and pleasing to the heart* (Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 17, verse 8).

Situated in the heart of Little India, is the devotee run restaurant Swaad. In 2020, Sanjayananda Krsna Das acquired the restaurant following the inspiration of his spiritual master H.H Bhakti Charu Swami, who encouraged him to provide sanctified food (Prasadam) not only to devotees in Singapore but to the wider community. Swaad is run by a team consisting of Sanjayananda Krsna Das, Shanta Nimai Das, Vishal Agarwal, Archa Vighraha Das, Dhameshwari Radhika Devi Dasi and Sonika Agarwal.

*"Swaad is not a business for us. It's a service dedicated to our Guru Maharaj and Srila Prabhupada to provide sanctified, fresh, nutritious saatvik food to wider community in Singapore and distribute Srila Prabhupada's books to spread Krsna consciousness."* Sanjayananda Krsna Das

This is a pure vegetarian restaurant, which focuses on the art of Saatvik food. Specialising in Gujarati and north Indian

vegetarian dishes, their signature snacks include Samosa, Dhokla, Jalebi, Khanda and much more. On weekends and public holidays there are special buffets served where you not only get to nourish your stomach, but also your soul. Krishna Conscious is present throughout the restaurant experience. Food is prepared by devotees, offered to the



Lord before it is served to the customers. While Prasadam is being honoured, one can hear sweet kirtan in the background and on the walls are various quotes from the Gita highlighting the importance of Prasadam.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Swaad, Gopals and others were instrumental in working with GRS to provide 150,000+ saatvik meals to foreign workers who were severely affected by the previous lockdowns.

*"For over 15 years Krishna Candra pioneered prasadam distribution in Singapore via Gopal's restaurant and now Sanjayananda Krsna Das has taken the mantle by starting Swaad."* Devakinandan Das.

Swaad now continues to serve the broader devotee community and the general population, spreading awareness about prasadam – sanctified food.



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 @swaadfoodart

 @swaad.foodart



# Upcoming Festivals

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## ● SNANA YATRA - 14 JUNE



The annual bathing rituals of their lordships - Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Subhadra Devi

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## ● JHULAN YATRA - 8 - 12 AUGUST



A festival to celebrate Radha Krishna's pastime of swinging on a golden swing everyday until Balarama Purnim

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## ● BALARAM JAYANTHI - 12 AUGUST



The appearance day of Lord Balarama. Lord Balarama is the first expansion of Lord Krishna appearing as His elder brother eight days before Lord Krishna's appearance day

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## ● JANMASHTAMI - 19 AUGUST



The appearance day of Lord Krishna. The Festival of the Supreme Person with a host of jubilent activities, from talks, kirtans, performances and more

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## ● SRILA PRABHUPADA'S APPEARANCE DAY - 20 AUGUST



The appearance day of His Divine Grace A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. An opportunity for all devotees to glorify the Founder-Acharya of the Hare Krishna Movement

# Be Involved

**Be informed, get involved and be inspired | Contact us**

Calling for writers, editors, artists and designers, who wish to work on GRS Patrika. Join our team, contact us. If you are performing or know of an important service that you believe should be featured on GRS Patrika, contact us. Contact details are as follows:

- **Lila Sundari Devi Dasi** (laxmi.r.iyer@gmail.com)
- **Meera Joshi** (meera.thankey@gmail.com)
- **Paramananda Das** (gprakashnarayan@gmail.com)

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to:

- Raghunandan Prabhu for giving us information on festivals.
- Sanjayananda Krsna Prabhu, Padma Locan Prabhu, and Bhaktin Koh Hwee Hwee for engaging in interviews and giving us relevant information regarding services.
- Photo Credits: Nitya Madhavi Mataji, Gaura Bhavini Mataji, Padma Locan Prabhu.
- Dinavatsala Prabhu for all administrative matters and miscellaneous services.

